

## **AWeSOMe**

(Adaptive Wilderness Sports Of McCall)

Alex Chery, a 12-year old boy from Newport Beach, California, loves to ski at Brundage Mountain. It's not that unusual for a kid to enjoy skiing at Brundage, but this boy is special. Alex has Cerebral Palsy. So how does a kid with a neurological disorder that affects body movement and muscle coordination even get down a mountain? And do it with a smile on his face?

The answer lies with a group of volunteers that, day in and day out, give up their own personal time to provide ski lessons to those who could use a little assist. Adaptive Wilderness Sports of McCall (AWeSOMe!)

is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower people of all abilities through high quality outdoor experiences. In the winter they teach those with disabilities how to ski or snowboard. In the summer, how to kayak. Their goal is to provide

participants the opportunity to learn new skills, challenge themselves, and work together to enhance the health and self-confidence necessary to expand human potential



Founded in 2001, AWeSOMe is a proud chapter of Disabled Sports USA, an organization that serves more than 60,000 disabled athletes annually. This winter alone, the volunteers of AWeSOMe have helped

enable 42 disabled skiers, like Alex, to enjoy the thrill of 'getting down the mountain'. This ski season they have provided over a thousand hours worth of instruction and encouragement. Marnie Sell, one of AWeSOMe's Adaptive Ski instructors, describes what it is like to work with disabled skiers. "Our goal is to start them out in the least restrictive environment



**AWeSOMe Instructor Dave Robie Leads a Disabled Skier**

possible. We stay with them until they become confident in their own abilities. And then, whenever possible, we try to teach ourselves out of a job." In other words, if the instructors are successful, their students graduate to skiing on their

own. Sell continues. "We couldn't have such a successful program if it wasn't for the support we receive from Brundage and others. Brundage provides the ski rentals, the lift tickets, and a place where we can store our special equipment. Other organizations such as Rotary and the Progressive Club have donated equipment such as Sliders, Mono-skis, and Outriggers."

And what about our young skier Alex? How did he make out with the AWeSOMe program? His dad, Anthony Chery, talks about Alex and his skiing progress, with obvious pride. "Alex doesn't let tough conditions hold him back. He is a hard worker but always has a big smile on his face. Last year, in his second season of skiing, he skied down from the Bear Chair. This year he made it down from the top of the mountain. He couldn't have done it without the wonderful



**L to R: Beth Guest, Alex, Clay Schmidt , Chip Sell**

instructors and volunteers of AweSOMe. They totally exceeded everything we could have expected.”

Sell adds one more dimension to this remarkable story. “After last year’s season, we had a staff get-

together with the Chery family. Dave Robie, one of our instructors and a retired US Navy Captain, presented Alex with one of Dave’s medals he had received for bravery during his naval service. ‘What Alex did this week was one of the bravest things I have ever seen. He’s the one who deserves this medal.’ ”

The good folks at AWeSOMe are now transitioning from their winter activities to their summer program. If you know someone that may benefit from their good work, you can contact them through email at: [info@awesomemccall.org](mailto:info@awesomemccall.org)